

# Tam O'Shanter Times

Spring 2011

Issue 54

## Farm's 25th anniversary celebrated by tree-planting



On 25th January the Mayor of Wirral, Councillor Alan Jennings, visited the urban farm to mark a very special occasion. Watched by a gathering of Trustees, Friends of the Farm and volunteers he collected the pine cone rent for the 25th time since the urban farm was formed in 1986 around

the restored cottage that had been, since 1976, the Field Study Centre for Bidston Hill. The pine cone arrangement, created this year by Vee Gatrell, was presented by Chair of Trustees, Councillor Denise Roberts. Near the new straw bale building the Mayor planted a rowan tree to commemorate the occasion. A soup and sandwich lunch supplied by the farm cafe was then served in the activity room, a welcome and warming conclusion to the event. The Wirral Globe was present, and subsequently printed a picture and a report.



## Linda retires

After many years working for Wirral Council, first at the Warrens Nursery, Arrowe Park then the walled garden at Royden Park and for the last 20 years here at Tam O'Shanter Urban Farm Linda will be taking well earned retirement at the end of June. Linda has been an invaluable member of staff and her experience and reliability will be difficult to replace though we are hoping to tempt her back to help in lots of ways..



### Wirral Urban Farm Association Annual General Meeting (AGM)

*7.30pm Wednesday 11 May 2011  
at the farm*

Come along to the AGM and have a cup of tea while you find out more about the urban farm and how you could help us keep it open for future generations. Your support and contribution is very important to us.

An important date for the Urban Farm  
**Hope to see you there**





# Animal update

As at 16th March we have the following numbers of livestock:

- 1 Gloucester Old Spot sow for breeding;
- 1 Large Black boar (here on loan);
- 4 Manx Loaghtan ewes due to lamb in April;
- 5 Manx Loaghtan yearlings which may be sold soon;
- 2 Golden Guernsey goats (nannies);
- 4 pet Rabbits;
- Jacko (Donkey) and Arnie (Shetland Pony);
- A pair of Cambridge Bronze turkeys and a pair of Bourbon Red turkeys;
- 3 geese (2 Brecon Buff and 1 Embden);
- 24 Ducks (7 Aylesbury, 5 Indian Runner, 2 Cayuga, 3 Silver Appleyard, 4 Khaki Campbell, 1 Call Duck and 2 others);
- 3 Guinea Fowl;
- 18 hens and 2 cockerels including Lavender Araucana, Light Sussex, Silkie, Maran and Rhode Island Red;
- 8 white doves.

Three of last years lambs have ben sold for £325 going to new homes in Mold and the Lake District. Look out for this year's lambs due to be born in April.



Nothing says Easter quite like a fluffy chick or brings home the wonders of nature to children like one cracking out of an egg and toddling along wetly until it fluffs up. We are hatching chicks and ducklings in a number of schools including: Bidston Avenue Primary, St Albans Primary school, Mendell Primary School, Rockferry Primary School and Sandbrook Primary School. After Easter we will have incubators in



St Peters, Heswall, Irby Primary, Prenton Primary, Thingwall Primary. Then in June Castleway, Our Lady of Pity, Greasby, Park Primary and Millfields Primary in Eastham.

## Current Farm strategy

We currently work towards a model detailed in our Management / Development Plan and reported on in our Annual Report submitted to the Charities Commission each year and available to anyone for £5.00. Our basic aims are to:

- Maximise visitor numbers
- Ensure the farm is as accessible as possible to as many as possible
- Cater for as many volunteers as possible
- Accommodate as many school visits as possible
- Maintain high welfare standards for livestock
- Remain a financially solvent but not for profit organisation

# Volunteers and Staffing

We receive between 5 and 10 applications/week from people wanting places here to do voluntary work for a variety of reasons. Unfortunately, we cannot take everyone on as we are limited by:

- the number of people able and willing to supervise others
- suitable tasks for those less able.

We have recently conducted a questionnaire of many of our volunteers to find out, in particular, what difference it makes to them coming here as a volunteer. For some it gives them good experience in their chosen career and helps when they go on to college or apply for jobs. Others just like animals and want something to do whilst many make new friends whilst working here.

The poem featured here was written by one of our new volunteers and sums up the feelings of many

Comments like this and the data from our survey will be used in future grant applications to secure funding for more paid staff. Wirral Council support the farm by providing staff although, as across all services, this will be cut, leaving two full time and one seasonal from later this year.

## Tam O'Shanter Urban Farm

Tam O'Shanter's farm, brings joy untold.  
Looking after the animals, you never feel the cold.  
If the weather's OK I do some gardening  
It's very rewarding but still a little hardening.

Andy is always around, if you ever need guiding  
He's the one in charge, so there's no skiving.  
The café provides you with a healthy meal.  
Then after this, it's good how you feel.

The boss is always there to help if you go wrong  
With plenty to do, your day is never long.  
Looking forward to the spring with new life on the farm  
Working with the animals will be very calm.

The farm is a mystery, I have yet to know  
Approaching the animals, they all know where to go.  
During the day some work can be a struggle  
But you feel better when out of a muddle.

In the polytunnel when working with the wood  
If you do it well, it makes you feel good.  
At the end of the day, you can leave it on the shelf  
Where you can collect it, without worrying yourself.

You can work in harmony, no one will insist  
But there's better results, if you don't resist.  
As a volunteer I really like my work there  
It beats being bored, something for which I care.

Once you get involved ..... all your problems feel resolved.

By Peter Smith *Volunteer*

To achieve these aims our current policies and priorities are:

- Maintain free admission
- Maintain clean, safe site and facilities
- Organise an attractive range of events and activities
- Maintain safe supervision of volunteers
- Maintain low stocking levels of livestock
- Maintain free entry for school visits
- Fund raising through sales, some service charges, café rental, donations, grants, events and other initiatives

Other options for the future which may be considered include:

1. Increasing income by charging for any of the following: Visitors, volunteer placements, school groups, events and activities

### *Consequences*

- Fewer visitors, school groups
- Lower maintenance costs
- Less accessible to some sectors of society
- Enable us to employ more staff
- Easier to manage with better facilities

2. Increase stocking levels

### *Consequences*

- Higher costs (feed, staff, vet) - greater risk of insolvency
- Better able to meet expectations of visitors
- More visitors - higher maintenance costs of the site - greater risk of insolvency - more pressure to increase income by imposing charges

There are many other strategies that we could look at with a variety of consequences. No doubt we will be considering many in the next few years as changes are forced upon us.

# Events and activities

Look out for Master Thatcher Wayne Halfpenny of 'Thatchright' who will be demonstrating his craft on the cottage roof during the Easter holidays (week beginning April 18th). See [www.thatchright.net](http://www.thatchright.net) for pics

## Storytelling

Saturday April 16th

Wednesday April 20th

Thursday April 21st

Wednesday 27th

Saturday April 3rd

Wednesday June 1st

Friday June 3rd

Saturday June 4th

1pm - 2pm and 3pm - 4pm

Free

Come and be entertained by our storyteller. Be amazed by tales of Fire, Earth, Air and Water. Hear stories brought to life from all over the world, from the Isle of Man to the Native Americans. Sessions are designed for ages 4-11 but suitable for all the family. No need to book, just come and take a seat to be whisked away to the land of make-believe.

## Craft Events

These are free craft events running from 1 - 4pm on the below dates.

Saturday April 9th

Saturday April 16th

Saturday 23rd April  
Suitable for all ages but particularly 5 – 11 year olds



## Easter Egg decorating and Mask making

Easter Sunday April 24th 1pm – 3pm

## Merseyside Police Roadshow

Wednesday April 27th 10am – 4pm

Police dogs and horses, information. Come and meet your local community police

## Thanks to:

The Late Julia Marshall and Kenna and Turner, Funeral Directors

Friends of the Late Jimmy Lee (£100)

Radio City who sponsored our turkeys at Christmas (£30) and promoted the farm

Mr David Bunting many pottery figurines to sell in our shop

Jenny Randall and Willie O'Halloran

29th Wallasey Beavers

All our members who gave a donation with their subscription

## E Coli 0157 and other Zoonoses (infectious diseases that can be transmitted from animals)

New guidelines from the HSE aimed at controlling these health hazards will include the following:

- The primary control measures should now focus on reducing and eliminating faecal contamination;
- Removing dirt and contamination remains very important through hand washing with soap and hot and cold or warm running water. It clarifies that hand gels are not suitable;
- It introduces the concept of 'contact areas', and 'non contact areas' where touching of animals and contact with faeces should be avoided.

We constantly review our risk assessment in this area and will be giving serious consideration to the prevention of any unsupervised access to animals that are considered highest risk in the carrying of E Coli (ruminants). In our case this means sheep and goats.

Also, at this time of year, pregnant women should be aware of the risk posed by contact with sheep and lambs up to 6 weeks old. There is a very slight risk that they can carry a virus that can cause a Toxoplasmosis infection which can seriously affect the health of an unborn child. It is best to avoid contact with sheep, particularly during lambing time.

**Friends of the Farm** is the working name of the Wirral Urban Farm Association (Charity number 515789) based at: Tam O'Shanter Urban Farm Boundary Road Bidston, Wirral CH43 7PD Tel: 0151 653 9332 Fax: 0151 652 4236 Email: [tamoshan@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:tamoshan@wirral.gov.uk) [www.tamoshanterfarm.org.uk](http://www.tamoshanterfarm.org.uk)

## Membership

£5/address/year due on the 1st

April. New members joining after January 1st will not be due for renewal until April the following year. If a membership form has been included with your newsletter then you are due for renewal. Please make cheques payable to: Wirral Urban Farm Association. You will receive 3 newsletters per year, an invitation to the AGM and the opportunity to become more involved by joining the committee. We do appreciate donations either through the box in the Animal

House or with your subscription. We have had a fantastic response to our drive to increase membership. From a low of 28 members in mid January we are now at 83 (as at 20.3.11) with new members joining almost on a daily basis. Thanks to everyone for joining or re-newing their membership.

